



# MSACOP News Notes

Editor Marlene Coley

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## Upcoming Mid South Area Office Professionals Meeting

The Mid South Area Council of Office Professionals is in the process of planning a Mid South Area Office Professionals Conference to be held **May 15-16, 2007**, in Oxford, MS. Please mark your calendars!! The conference will begin at 8:00 a.m. on Tuesday, May 15, and will conclude at noon on Wednesday, May 16.

As you all know, a survey was sent to MSA Office Professionals in September 2006, to request input from office professionals in relation to training topics that need to be addressed at this Conference. From the



results of this survey, a tentative agenda has been drafted that includes topics such as: (1) RPES Guidelines, (2) AIMS and Agreements, (3) MS Outlook (new E-mail), (4) Foreign Travel and Cost Comparisons, (5) Star Web, (6) Budget and ARMPS, (7) Performance Evaluations, (8) ARIS, (9) Sharepoint, and (10)

## MSACOP Web Page.

The keynote speaker has not been selected yet but several possibilities are being considered.

The Council will continue working on the details for this Conference. Information will be sent to all office professionals in the near future. We look forward to seeing everyone in Oxford, MS, May 15-16, 2007.

If you have additional comments regarding this Conference, please E-mail Linda Fulton at:

[ljfulton@ars.usda.gov](mailto:ljfulton@ars.usda.gov).

**Submitted by Linda Fulton**

## A Great Recipe (Submitted by Linda Fulton, Oxford, MS)

Fold two hands together,  
And express a dash of sorrow.  
Marinate it overnight  
And work on it tomorrow.  
Chop one grudge in tiny pieces,  
Add several cups of love.  
Dredge with a large sized smile,

Mix with the ingredients above.  
Dissolve the hate within you,  
By doing a good deed.  
Cut in and help your friend,  
If he/she should be in need.  
Stir in laughter, love, and kindness,  
From the heart it has to come.

Toss with genuine forgiveness,  
And give your friends some.  
The amount of people served,  
Will depend on you.  
It can serve the whole wide world,  
If you really want it to!!!  
-Author Unknown

## Safety For Women *(Submitted by Tammy Dorman, Auburn, AL)*

### 8 Crucial Tips - It never hurts to be careful in this crazy world we live in.

1. Tip from Tae Kwon Do: The elbow is the strongest point on your body. If you are close enough to use it, do so!

2. Learned this from a tourist guide in New Orleans. If a robber asks for your wallet and/or purse, **DO NOT HAND IT TO HIM**. Toss it away from you....chances are that he is more interested in your wallet and/or purse than you, and he will go for the wallet/purse. **RUN LIKE MAD IN THE OTHER DIRECTION!**

3. If you are ever thrown into the trunk of a car, kick out the back tail lights and stick your arm out the hole and start waving like crazy. The driver won't see you, but everybody else will. This has saved lives.

4. Women have a tendency to get into their cars after shopping, eating, working, etc., and just sit (doing their checkbook, or making a list, etc.) **DON'T DO THIS!** The predator will be watching you, and this is the perfect opportunity for him to get in on the passenger side, put a gun to your head, and tell you where to go. **AS SOON**

**AS YOU GET INTO YOUR CAR, LOCK THE DOORS AND LEAVE.**

A). If someone is in the car with a gun to your head **DO NOT DRIVE OFF**, repeat: **DO NOT DRIVE OFF!** Instead gun the engine and speed into anything, wrecking the car. Your Air Bag will save you. If the person is in the back seat they will get the worst of it. As soon as the car crashes bail out and run. It is better than having them find your body in a remote location.

5. A few notes about getting into your car in a parking lot, or parking garage:

A) Be aware: look around you, look into your car, at the passenger side floor, and in the back seat

B) If you are parked next to a big van, enter your car from the passenger door. Most serial killers attack their victims by pulling them into their vans while the women are attempting to get into their cars.

C) Look at the car parked on the driver's side of your vehicle, and the passenger side. If a male is sitting alone in the seat nearest your car, you may want to walk back into the mall, or work, and get a guard/policeman to walk you back out.

**IT IS ALWAYS BETTER TO BE SAFE THAN SORRY.** (And better paranoid than dead.)

6. **ALWAYS** take the elevator instead of the stairs. (Stairwells are horrible places to be alone and the perfect crime spot. This is especially true at **NIGHT!**)

7. If the predator has a gun and you are not under his control, **ALWAYS RUN!** The predator will only hit you (a running target) 4 in 100 times; And even then, it most likely **WILL NOT** be a vital organ. **RUN, Preferably!** in a zig-zag pattern!

8. As women, we are always trying to be sympathetic: **STOP**. It may get you raped, or killed. Ted Bundy, the serial killer, was a good-looking, well educated man, who **ALWAYS** played on the sympathies of unsuspecting women. He walked with a cane, or a limp, and often asked "for help" into his vehicle or with his vehicle, which is when he abducted his next victim.

(by Shannon LaForge)



## Kids and Internet Safety

*(Submitted by Marlene Coley, Stoneville, MS)*

The Internet offers an array of entertainment and educational resources for children but also presents some risks. Approximately one in seven youths (10 to 17 years) experience a sexual solicitation or approach while online.<sup>1</sup>

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) is committed to helping all audiences — from kids to parents and guardians to law-enforcement officers and educators — learn the aspects of Internet safety.

You can't watch kids every minute, but you can use strategies to help them benefit from the Internet and avoid its risks.



NCMEC urges you to do one of the single most important things to promote safety — talk to kids about the rewards and risks of Internet use. We also encourage you to visit the NetSmartz® Workshop at [NetSmartz.org](http://NetSmartz.org). Report any incidents of online child sexual exploitation to CyberTipline® at [cybertipline.com](http://cybertipline.com).

IRS: <http://www.irs.gov> *(Submitted by: Lynda Taylor, Stoneville, MS)*

REE Directory: <http://199.133.10.140/>

Electronic Forms are now REE Forms: <http://reeforms.ars.usda.gov/REEForms/>

Per Diem Rates: <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov>

Pay Tables: <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov>

## Office Organizing Tips

(Submitted by Telecia Burton, Oxford, MS)

### Manage Your Time

- Use a planner to track appointments and tasks. It can be a paper-based notebook, a computer software program, or an electronic handheld device.
  - Create at least one hour of uninterrupted time per day to tackle projects and action items.
  - Allocate twice as much time for a task as you think it will take. This accommodates for interruptions and stopping to get more information.
- Break large projects down into small, sequential steps. Schedule these into your day with your planner.

### Tame Your Desk

- Keep only supplies you need on a daily basis on your desktop.
- Create a paper flow system for your incoming documents.
- Use your in box only for items that haven't yet been reviewed.

Avoid looking at documents and placing them back on the desk. Follow through with the decision you have made about the document.

### Supercharge Your Communication

- Write an agenda before making a phone call so you don't forget the important points.
  - Keep a record or schedule follow-up calls of what you've delegated so it doesn't fall through the cracks.
- Be clear about the response you need when sending messages to colleagues. They can then provide a full response, even if they don't reach you directly.

### Conquer Your Filing

- Create a filing system for your electronic documents that mirrors the one you have for paper. Sort, file, and purge electronic information regularly.
- Keep a file index (a master list of file names). Check the index before creating a new file to avoid making duplicates.

Also use it when deciding where to put new documents. Keep the most recent papers in the front of the file. Whenever you open it, the current information will be on top.

Taken from the *National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO)* website ([www.napo.net](http://www.napo.net))

## Travel Tips

If you fail to claim an expense on a voucher (i.e. lodging expenses) you can file another voucher for the portion of authorized expenses that were omitted on the originally processed voucher. A voucher must be prepared **by hand**. You will not be able to enter the voucher online. Complete the voucher showing only the omitted expenses. Do not include expenses that were filed on the first



voucher. In the remarks section, (THIS IS IMPORTANT) State the reason for the reclaim and include the statement: "Attached is a copy of the original processed voucher with supporting receipts."

Send voucher with original signatures and supporting documents along with a copy of the original AD-616 (voucher) worksheet and supporting receipts to NFC, P.O. Box 60000, New Orleans, LA 70160. Remember to keep a copy for everything for your records.

By Virginia Kelly, Stoneville  
(submitted by Lynda Taylor)

## Save Your Work Often

(Submitted by Janice Boyd, New Orleans, LA)

Here is a simple trick. Save your work often. Too simple a tip, you say? Why am I mentioning it here, you might say? Because most people STILL DO NOT save their files until they are done working with them.

Imagine a well-known author working on a manuscript for a sure-to-be best seller novel. This author decides that the pressures of working within walls stifles his creativity, so the decision is

made to work outside. All of the work is done outside and written on sheets of paper. The author decides, to make the writing process easier, to scatter the papers around.

It rains. It thunderstorms. A dog comes running through the paper. Any way you look at it, the paper is ruined.

That's what you are doing when you don't save a file in progress but wait

until you are finished to save your work. You are trusting your file to the elements. A power surge can strike; a program error could crash the o/s; someone could trip over the plug. UPS systems can fail. I have seen each of these things happen personally so I can attest to the fact.

Heed this warning for your own data safety.

## Disaster Preparedness

(Submitted by Lynda Taylor, Stoneville, MS)

How prepared are you for a disaster? Since Hurricane Katrina, preparations for disaster preparedness have been discussed. The Mid South Area has collected emergency information from employees as a part of their disaster readiness plan. There is a Stoneville's Human Pandemic Plan which provides guidelines for the various phases of a pandemic. The agency has provided guidelines and information in anticipation of a pandemic but I have not seen much in the way of

providing information to employees and their families as to how individuals should prepare for other emergencies. In the Stoneville's Human Pandemic Plan, 5.2 Employees, it states, "Employees and their family members with computers should immediately bookmark – both on their work and home computers - [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov) for up-to-date information on the disease, how to prevent its spread, and how to treat it; and [www.usda.gov/oo/beprepared/](http://www.usda.gov/oo/beprepared/) for USDA updates and information; these two web sites will be key conduits for information before, during and after a pandemic."



Perhaps Office Professionals could take the initiative

in providing information and encouragement to individuals for preparedness in case of an emergency. For useful information check out the website [www.areyouprepared.com](http://www.areyouprepared.com) which has a downloadable guide with information for preparing for a variety of disasters. Within the guide are pages to record emergency information, instructions for purification of water, suggested quantities of food and water to store, what actions to take when, and other valuable information.

## Stoneville's OP Corner

(Submitted by Stacye Harrison, Chairperson)

The last Stoneville Office Professionals meeting was held November 8, 2006 in the JWDRCS 1<sup>st</sup> floor conference room where several topics of interest were discussed. Subjects such as suggestions for minimizing redundancy of daily task seemed to dominate the meeting. There were many great ideas and much input related to cross-training both within departments as well as outside.

Several of the Office Automation Assistants and Program Assistants were detailed to other units for a 30-day period and many of them shared their experiences with the group. In preparation for the next meeting, each member was asked to bring a specific issue of concern to that meeting and we would try to have a representative from each department present that could possibly better address those items that are significance to their office.

I personally feel that these meetings are extremely beneficial and I think that the members are eager to have these type meetings as they seem to open discussions that are relevant to each department and in many ways answer questions that may otherwise go unanswered.

I enjoy working with Donna Signa on this council and look forward to the upcoming quarterly meeting

## Quick Hands-On Stress Relief

(Submitted by Marlene Coley)

Got a minute? Get a massage—a self-massage, that is. These moves can help relieve tension around your head, neck, shoulders and hands.

**The Scalp Soother:** Place thumbs behind your ears and spread your fingers on top of your head. Move your scalp back and forth slightly by making circles with your fingertips for 15-20

seconds.

**The Eye Easer:** close your eyes and place your ring fingers directly under your eyebrows, near the bridge of your nose. Slowly increase pressure for five seconds, then gently release. Repeat 2-3 times.

**The Shoulder Saver:** place your left hand on the right side of your neck by your shoulder. Press

fingers firmly into the muscle while tucking your chin in toward your chest. Hold this position for 10 seconds, release, and then repeat on the left side.

**The Palm Pleaser:** lace your fingers together, leaving thumbs free. Slowly knead your left thumb into the palm of your right hand for 20-30 seconds. Then repeat on your left hand.





## The Road to Greater Effectiveness *(Submitted by Drusilla Fratesi, Stoneville, MS)*

We all know about goals, plans, schedules, and lists. But just how effective are we each day? Our objective should be to make ourselves valuable to our agency, our office, our supervisor. Take the time to determine your needs and the needs of your organization and figure out your part in fulfilling those needs. Following are a few suggestions.

1. Find a job, or spend ample time in that part of your job, which allows you to make some use of your talents and interests and you will find that you are happier, healthier and more effective. Begin by assessing your skills and knowledge. Self-assessment is a process which helps us learn more about ourselves – what we like, what we don't like, and how we tend to react to certain situations. Knowing these things can help determine which work situations would be a better fit for each of us. Assessment tools available include personality indicators, interest inventories, skill surveys and values in-

ventories, and are available in book form or electronically. Some of these tools offer a combination of assessments by using only one test and many are free.

2. We all know it is important to set both personal and professional goals. Setting goals costs you nothing but a little time and thought; not setting goals can bring you regret and possibly failure. You must set aside "downtime" to collect your thoughts, make and prioritize goals, let your creativity shine through, and concentrate on solutions to problems. A few minutes each day can make a big difference.

3. Improve your skills in areas that will be most beneficial. Be a solution-maker. Find an area that you excel in and use it. And don't hesitate to share your knowledge or skills with others. See what additional training or resources are available and ask for the approval to sign up. (Costs vary, so consider all sources when searching for options to fit in your budget.)

4. Ask for feedback from your supervisor

and co-workers. Look for ways to do things better. Be willing to take risks. And when mistakes are made, own up to them and use them as an opportunity to learn and do things differently in the future.

5. Focus on one or two tasks at a time. Have you ever felt like you had so much to do, you didn't know where to start? Multi-tasking can be beneficial at times. However, the most important time to prioritize and focus is when you are feeling busy and overwhelmed. Devoting your full attention to one or two tasks allows you to complete them and move on.

Some individuals are primarily concerned with their paycheck, but most of us look for ways to improve our work. Hopefully, some of the suggestions above may help you to be more effective in your work.

## SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW EVERYTHING? (You will when you finish this...)

- "Stewardesses" is the longest word typed with only the left hand and "lollipop" with your right. (Bet you tried his out mentally, didn't you?)
- No word in the English language rhymes with month, orange, silver, or purple.
- "Dreamt" is the only English word that ends in the letters "mt". (Do you doubt this?)
- Our eyes are always the same size from birth, but our nose and ears never stop growing.
- The sentence: "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog" uses every letter of the alphabet. (Now, you KNOW you're going to try this out for accuracy, right?)
- The words 'racecar,' 'kayak' and 'level' are the same whether they are read left to right or right to left (palindromes). (Yep, I knew you were going to "do" this one.)
- There are only four words in the English language which end in "dous": tremendous, horrendous, stupendous, and hazardous. (You're not doubting this, are you?)
- There are two words in the English lan-

guage that have all five vowels in order: "abstemious" and "facetious." (Yes, admit it, you are going to say: a e i o u)

- TYPEWRITER is the longest word that can be made using the letters only on one row of the keyboard. (All you typists are going to test this out)
- A goldfish has a memory span of three seconds (Some days that's about what my memory span is)
- A "jiffy" is an actual unit of time for 1/100th of a second.
- A shark is the only fish that can blink with both eyes.
- A snail can sleep for three years. (I know some people that could do this too.)
- Babies are born without kneecaps; they don't appear until the child reaches 2 to 6 years of age.
- In the last 4,000 years, no new animals have been domesticated.
- If the population of China walked past you, 8 abreast, the line would never end be-

cause of the rate of reproduction.

- Peanuts are one of the ingredients of dynamite!
- Rubber bands last longer when refrigerated.
- The average person's left hand does 56% of the typing.
- The cruise liner, QE2, moves only six inches for each gallon of diesel that it burns.
- The microwave was invented after a researcher walked by a radar tube and a chocolate bar melted in his pocket. (Good thing he did that)
- The winter of 1932 was so cold that Niagara Falls froze completely solid.
- There are more chickens than people in the world.
- Winston Churchill was born in a ladies' room during a dance.
- Women blink nearly twice as much as men.

Now you know everything!

*(Submitted by Kay Bolen, Bowling Green, KY)*

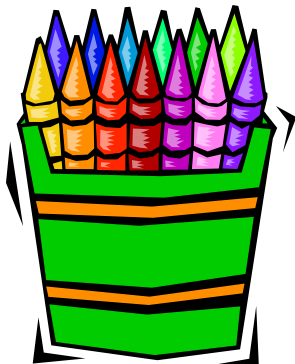


## MSACOP

2006-2007 MSA Council Members  
 Back Row L to R: Telecia Burton (Ex-Officio), Drusilla Fratesi (Tech. Adv), Marlene Coley (Recorder), Lucienne Savell, Alice Redditt, Tammy Dorman (Jr. Chair), Dr. Deborah Brennan (Advisor), Bottom Row L to R: Kay Bolen, Linda Fulton (Sr. Chair), Janice Boyd, Madeline Hall (TA-Ex Officio), and Janell Becker (out going member).  
 Not pictured—Lynda Taylor & Ann McGee.

### We're on the Web:

[http://  
msa.ars.usda.gov/osp](http://msa.ars.usda.gov/osp)



We could learn a lot  
 from crayons....  
 Some are sharp, some  
 are pretty, some are dull,  
 some have weird names,  
 and all are different  
 colors...  
 But they all have to learn  
 to live in the same box!

## Mid South Area Council of Office Professionals

The **Mission** of the Mission of the MSACOP is to provide a resource for the Area Director's Office and all levels of management for matters relating to office professionals.

The **Goal** of the Council is to enhance office professions through training, networking, mentoring, and recognition of office support employees. It is the desire of the Council to work with all levels of management to assure that office support staff are highly skilled and motivated professionals and to assure that the clerical and administrative needs of the Mid South Area and ARS are met.



## Great Humorous Lines From Office Employee Evaluations

1. I would not allow this employee to breed.
2. This associate is not so much of a has-been, but more definitely a won't be.
3. Works well when under constant supervision and cornered like a rat in a trap.
4. When she opens her mouth, it seems it is only to change whatever foot was previously there.
5. This young lady has delusions of adequacy.
6. He set low personal standards and then consistently fails to achieve them.
7. This employee is depriving a village somewhere of an idiot.
8. This employee should go far, and the sooner he starts, the better.
9. Got into the gene pool while the lifeguard was not looking.
10. Got a full 6-pack, but lacks the plastic thing to hold it together.
11. A photographic memory but with the lens cover glued on.
12. A prime candidate for natural de-selection.
13. If you give him a penny for his thoughts, you will get change.
14. If you stand close enough to him, you can hear the ocean.
15. Since my last report, this employee has reached rock bottom and has started to dig.